

Anselm on the Cost of Salvation

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Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* (CDH) discusses a number of objections to the Christian claim that God became incarnate and atoned for human sin. One objection is this: if God is omnipotent and wise and offers humanity salvation, God does not become incarnate or atone for human sin. For if God is omnipotent, God can offer humanity salvation without doing either. If God can do so, then if He is wise, He would not have become incarnate or atoned. For it would not be wise,

to suffer so many unseemly things for no reason . . . if for no reason a human were to do with great labor something which that person could have done easily, nobody would judge that person to be wise.¹

This paper examines Anselm's reply to this argument in order to shed light on a number of issues in philosophical theology, including the metaphysics of the Incarnation, the relation between perfect being theology and the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement, the senses in which the Christian God might be impassible, and the nature of God's perfect rationality and wisdom.

I. THE ARGUMENT EXPLICATED

For an omnipotent God, no possible means can be harder than any other; the divine nature "cannot labor in what it wills to do."² So the omnipotence-wisdom argument's talk of God's "labor" or "ease" can seem, at best, anthropomorphic. But it would be hasty to reject the argument because of this. For while no means of salvation can cost an omnipotent God effort, the Atonement costs God pain and death. Talk of labor could be a way to advert

1. I refer to *Cur Deus Homo* (CDH) first by book and chapter, then by the volume, page, and line numbers of the Schmitt edition (F.S. Schmitt, *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, vols. I–III 1946, IV–V 1951). Thus this quotation is from CDH I, 6, S II, p. 54, ll. 5, 14–16. Translations are mine save as noted.

2. CDH I, 8, S II, p. 59, l. 20.

to pain and death, and it can seem that a wise God would not suffer these if He could avoid them.

Further, CDH suggests that not just the Atonement, but also the Incarnation had a cost, one a wise God would not pay if He could avoid. Anselm's interlocutor Boso restates the omnipotence-wisdom argument as a claim that it is "repugnant to reason . . . that the most high descends to such lowly things (*humilia*), that the omnipotent does something with such labor."³ Boso's *humilia* include being in a womb, being born, growing, and being nourished by milk and food.⁴ Boso suggests that undergoing these things would literally humiliate God; having listed them, Boso pushes Anselm to show "the necessity which proves that God could or should be lowered (*humiliari*) to those things which we say of Him."⁵ The humiliation Boso sees might lie in these things being beneath God's dignity.⁶ While it is no indignity for a baby to wear a diaper, it is an indignity for an adult to wear a diaper. Parading an adult through town in a diaper could shame and humiliate; an adult so treated might find it hard to keep living in the town. If a diaper is beneath an adult human's dignity, how much more is it beneath God's?

Birth, growth, and such do not conceptually involve pain or death; it is at least logically possible that someone undergo these without ever feeling pain or dying. Further, *being* humiliated is logically independent of *feeling* humiliated, which might count as a sort of pain—one can be humiliated but not be aware of it, and feel humiliated when one really is not.⁷ So Boso's humiliations are a cost of the Incarnation distinct from pain. Further, Boso's *humilia* would have been part of the Incarnation even had there been no Atonement. So Boso suggests that, even apart from the Passion and Atonement, the Incarnation had a cost: the Incarnation humiliated God. Boso can add that a wise God would avoid needless humiliation, even if it caused Him no pain.

3. CDH I, 8, S II, p. 59, ll. 13, 16–17.

4. CDH I, 3 S II, p. 50, ll. 24–28.

5. "necessitas quae probet deum ad ea quae praedicamus debuisse aut potuisse humiliari." CDH I, 4, S II, p. 52, ll. 3–4, my emphasis.

6. God's dignity, and affronts to it, are a basic motif in CDH. For a thorough discussion, see Marilyn Adams, "Satisfying Mercy," *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 91–108.

7. One might argue: while it is possible for non-divine persons to be, but not feel, humiliated, this is not possible for God. For God as omniscient cannot be humiliated without knowing that He is being humiliated, and God as all-wise always has a maximally appropriate reaction to what He knows—which in this case would be to feel humiliated. Now even if this argument were sound, this would not show that there is a conceptual connection between being and feeling humiliated, even in God's case. But I think the argument has a weakness: is it really true that God's maximally appropriate reaction to being humiliated is to feel humiliated? Christians will surely doubt this—Christ does not seem to have responded this way to the humiliations of the Passion. But even non-Christians might suppose that God would instead feel pity for those so blind and malicious as to seek to humiliate Him.

One can also read "*humilia*" as lowerings, not humiliations. Now Anselm is committed to the project of perfect-being theology, that is, explicating the concept of God by tracing the entailments of the claim that God is a perfect being.⁸ Perfect-being theology might gloss Boso's point about *humilia* this way: God is a maximally perfect being. Being God is better than being anything else. If so, being anything else is a step down for God. If so, God would be better off only being God than being both God and human. (So too, one might be better off as just a millionaire than as at once a millionaire and a sewer worker.) Thus if God became incarnate, God would have a less perfect life, and so would be less perfect overall, than a God who was never anything but God. If God is maximally perfect, nothing is possibly greater than God actually is. So if it is possible that God not be incarnate, God was not incarnate. This perfect-being gloss has the merit of suggesting why Anselm, at once a Christian and a perfect-being theist, might find Boso's objection an important one to tackle.

Thus while nothing can cost an omnipotent God effort or labor, Boso can argue that an Incarnation and Atonement would cost God pain, death, humiliation, and His status as maximally perfect. Boso's point, again, is that a wise God would not pay such costs were they avoidable, and that they seem avoidable for an omnipotent God. Let "C-[Christian]-salvation" abbreviate "salvation via an Incarnation and Atonement" and "P" abbreviate "God saves humankind and does not become incarnate or atone for human sin, and avoiding Incarnation and Atonement does not leave the balance of good and evil in the world unacceptable". "Unacceptable" in this last claim is a blanket term covering every sort of acceptability, including moral and prudential; the sense of P is that there is no grist left at all for an objection to God's avoiding the Incarnation and Atonement. Given these abbreviations, perhaps the omnipotence-wisdom argument is really this:

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| (1) God is perfectly wise. | (premise) |
| (2) God is omnipotent. | (premise) |
| (3) If God is perfectly wise, God pays no unjustified, avoidable costs to save humankind. | (premise) |
| (4) If God is omnipotent, then ($\Diamond P \supset$ God can effect it that P). | (premise) |
| (5) $\Diamond P$. | (premise) |
| (6) If God can effect it that P, then if God becomes incarnate or atones, God pays an unjustified, avoidable cost to have humankind. | (premise) |
| (7) $\Diamond P \supset$ God can effect it that P. | (2, 4, MP) |

8. See *Monologion* 15, *Proslogion* 5.

- (8) God can effect it that P. (5, 7, MP)
- (9) If God becomes incarnate or atones, God pays an unjustified, avoidable cost to save humankind. (6, 8, MP)
- (10) God pays no unjustified, avoidable cost to save humankind. (1, 3, MP)
- (11) God does not become incarnate or atone. (9, 10, MT)

Let us call (1)–(11) the Divine Cost Argument, or DCA.⁹ As DCA is valid, the question Christians face is what to make of its premises. I now suggest that (5) and (6) are the most promising targets for criticism, that Anselm has no case against (5), and that his response to DCA is to question (6). To counter (6), Anselm appeals to Chalcedonian Christology. This, I argue, blocks DCA as an objection to the Incarnation, but not as an objection to the Atonement. I finally consider two ways an account of God's rationality might save the doctrine of the Atonement from DCA, one of which is Anselm's.

II. THE PREMISES DEFENDED

(1) is a primary religious claim, non-negotiable for Christians. The claim that God is a perfect being also seems to entail (1). (2) has the same backing. Arguably (3) partly explicates (1), and so inherits (1)'s force.¹⁰ Arguably (4) has the same relation to (2). (4) is also independently plausible. (4) follows from the claim that:

O. an omnipotent being can actualize any logically possible state of affairs.

9. Read as DCA, Boso's objection becomes a good complement to CDH I, 3's argument that the Incarnation is "unsuitable" to or "unbefitting" God (S II, p. 50, ll. 24–28). I, 3 claims that the suffering, dependence, weakness and death of Christ's earthly career are unsuited to the divine nature: I, 3 does not say why, but one reasonable thought is that such things are unsuited to such "metaphysical" divine attributes as aseity, impassibility, and immutability. Boso's objection contends that the choice to undergo these is unsuited to the divine wisdom and omnipotence—that is, to the divine *personal* attributes.

10. To explicate a proposition's content, one displays propositions it entails. Thus one might explicate "God is perfectly wise" by saying *inter alia* that God always chooses the best means to His ends. We usually call these entailed propositions the proposition's content. Such conditionals as (3) are *why* these propositions are entailed. Why are such conditionals true? I incline to answer: because of what the conditionals' predicates mean, and so ultimately due to what the original proposition's predicate means. So I incline to include not just entailed propositions but also entailment-grounding conditionals in the proposition's content.

One must qualify or supplement (O) to get a viable account of omnipotence.¹¹ But the qualifications do not affect (4).¹² So (4) inherits most of (O)'s initial plausibility.

The conjunction of (1) and (2) supports (5). For it surely seems that perfect wisdom could craft and omnipotence execute a plan of salvation not involving an Incarnation. Anselm, for instance, takes it at least initially as a live option that God save humanity through some agent other than Himself or by simply willing to forgive, without the payment of an atoning sacrifice.¹³

(6) is the conjunction of

(6a) if God can effect it that P, then if God becomes incarnate or atones, God pays an avoidable cost to save humankind, and

(6b) if God can effect it that P, then if God becomes incarnate or atones, God pays an unjustified cost to save humankind.

To effect it that P is *inter alia* to avoid paying the costs C-salvation involves. So if God can effect it that P, God can avoid paying these costs. Thus (6a) is true.

Anselm himself helps make a case for (6b). For Anselm argues about Christ that

one sin which harms this man is more dreadful than all other sins which can be conceived.¹⁴

no magnitude nor multitude of sins which are not against the person of God is comparable to the sin of harming the physical life of this man.¹⁵

Anselm is clear that those who executed Christ did not succeed in killing God the Son. But these texts speak not just of killing God but more generally of causing Him harm. Anselm holds that Christ's executioners harmed Him not knowing Him to be God, and so did not commit an "infinite" sin.¹⁶ Anselm's claim is that *knowing* harm to God is the greatest conceivable sin. But I take it that this is the greatest conceivable sin because it is doing with full responsibility the greatest conceivable evil. Now, unknowing harm to the human nature of God the Son is as great an evil as knowing harm would be. Anselm's point about Christ's executioners is not that they did not do what was in fact so great an evil, but that as they did it unknowingly, they are not responsible for the full extent of the evil they

11. For qualifications, see, for example, Thomas Flint and Alfred Freddoso, "Maximal Power," in *The Concept of God*, ed. Thomas Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 134–167. One might need supplements to explain God's ability to effect states of affairs in which creatures act freely.

12. For P does not involve states of affairs of sorts God's power over which we must qualify. See again, Flint and Freddoso, "Maximal Power."

13. CDH I, 1, S II, p. 48, ll. 2–5.

14. CDH II, 14, S II, p. 114, ll. 9–11.

15. CDH II, 14, S II, p. 114, ll. 17–19.

16. CDH II, 15, S II, p. 115, ll. 16–21.

did—which is, all the same, the greatest conceivable evil. Thus on Anselm's terms, if God becomes incarnate and atones, God allows the greatest conceivable evil to occur, and so there must be something which justifies His allowing the greatest conceivable evil.

Philosophers often take God to be justified in allowing an evil only if the evil was necessary for avoiding some greater evil or obtaining some sufficiently great good—that is, only if God could not avoid the evil at an acceptable price.¹⁷ (6a) tells us that if God can effect it that P, the greatest conceivable evil is avoidable. Further, if God can effect it that P, God can avoid this evil at an acceptable price in allowed evil or forfeited good. Under these conditions, it seems hard to see what *could* justify God's allowing this evil. Thus (6b) appears true.

In any event, the force of DCA is that given (6b), (1) and (2) are good reasons to reject the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement. As Christians insist on Incarnation, Atonement, (1), and (2), DCA threatens—given (6b)—to expose an inconsistency at the core of Christian theology. Anselm may find DCA especially troubling. As we have noted, (1) and (2) arguably follow from the claim that God is a perfect being. Anselm is committed to perfect-being theology. If perfect-being theology dictates (1) and (2) and given (6b), (1) and (2) are inconsistent with the doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement, then given (6b), DCA leads to an argument against the Incarnation from perfect-being theology. If sound, this argument would force Anselm to surrender either his theological project or his Christianity.

Let us now consider how Anselm counters DCA.

III. MIGHT GOD HAVE AVOIDED THE INCARNATION?

CDH can seem to argue against (5). For it climaxes in an argument that

it is necessary that God's goodness . . . complete what it began to do with humanity . . . this cannot be done unless there is someone who pays to God, for human sin, something greater than every thing which is other than God . . . only God can make this satisfaction. But only a human ought to make this satisfaction . . . therefore . . . it is necessary that a God-man make it.¹⁸

This argument seems to conclude that the Incarnation is in some sense "necessary," and so entail the denial of (5). But let us take a closer look at the reasoning in CDH.

17. See for example, William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Robert M. Adams and Marilyn Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 128.

18. CDH II, 5, S II, p. 100, ll. 26–27; CDH II, 6, S II, p. 101, ll. 3–4, 12, 16, 18–19.

If God does not offer humanity salvation by making an atoning sacrifice in His own person, then if He offers humanity salvation, He does so either by bringing about some lesser compensation for human sin or entirely without compensation. Hence to show that the Incarnation is necessary as a means of human salvation—that (5) is false—Anselm would have to show it necessarily false that if God offers humanity salvation, He does so via some lesser compensation for sin and necessarily false that if God offers humanity salvation, He does so without any compensation for sin. Anselm knows that these are the topics he must tackle. For CDH opens by asking why God did not save humanity through some agent other than Himself—that is, through the making of some lesser compensation—or by simply willing to forgive, without exacting an atoning sacrifice.¹⁹

Anselm's answer to the first question is that this would not fulfill God's original plan for humanity.²⁰ God, according to Anselm, has willed to make humans equal to angels in being subject only to Himself, and so cannot let us owe a third party the debt that we would owe if that third party stepped in to save us.²¹ On this account, it is contingent that God cannot complete His plan for humanity through a third-party savior. For God need not have willed humans to be equal to angels. God need not have created angels at all. If no angels existed, God could still have willed humans to exist, but would not then have had as a goal that they be angels' equals. Nor need God have made humanity subject only to Him. On a standard reading of Genesis 2, God subjected non-human animals both to humanity and to Himself. So God is able to subject some creatures to others, and if God can ever ordain or endorse a human government, God is able to subject some rational creatures to others.

By resting God's rejection of third-party salvation on a contingent divine goal, Anselm leaves it open that God might have had a plan for humankind that would have allowed this mode of salvation. Anselm does not argue it to be necessarily false that if God offers humanity salvation, He does so via some lesser sacrifice. Instead, Anselm concedes it possible that God save humankind via some lesser sacrifice. Would His doing so leave the universe with an acceptable good-evil balance? Anselm argues that harming Christ is the greatest conceivable evil—that even one ordinary sin is a greater evil than would be involved in the destruction of an infinity of complete Creations,²² and that the evil of harming Christ is even greater than this. So, it is hard to see how any plan not involving harming Christ could have a good-evil balance worse than a plan involving harming Christ. It seems then that if C-salvation involves an acceptable good-evil balance, salvation by a third party would as well. Far from rejecting (5), then, Anselm's arguments seem to support it.

19. CDH I, 1, S II, p. 48, ll. 2–5.

20. CDH I, 5, S II, p. 52, ll. 19–24; see also CDH II, 4, S II, p. 99.

21. CDH I, 5, S II, p. 52.

22. CDH I, 21, S II, p. 89.

Let us now return to CDH's climactic argument. There Anselm derives the "necessity" for a God-man from the "necessity" that God complete what He began with humankind. But even if it is true in every possible world that if God begins this sort of plan for humans, God completes it, it remains contingent that God has this sort of plan for humanity. So CDH's climactic argument concludes that the Incarnation is necessary *only relative to other, contingent divine decisions*. This conclusion does not entail the denial of (5). Again, Anselm's claim that "only a human ought to make this satisfaction" rests on the premisses that God ought to complete His original plan and God originally plans to equalize humans and angels and have humans subject only to Himself. The latter is a contingent truth. Since this contingent truth is a premise in the case for "only a human ought to make this satisfaction," the latter is also contingent. So Anselm's argument that the Incarnation did and should occur contains a contingent premise derived from God's contingent actual plan for humankind. Thus Anselm's argument can validly infer only a contingent proposition affirming the Incarnation. But the Incarnation would have to occur necessarily for (5) to be false. So CDH makes no case against (5).²³

IV. THE COST OF SALVATION

CDH argues against (6). For when Boso restates the omnipotence-wisdom argument, Anselm replies that

the divine nature is impassible . . . it cannot be brought down from its height, nor can it labor in what it wills to do . . . when we say that God suffers some lowness or weakness . . . we understand this to be in accordance with the weakness of the human nature which He assumed We do not understand there to have been any lowering of the divine nature in the incarnation . . . instead . . . human nature was exalted . . . Let nothing be imputed to the divine nature which is said of Christ in accord with the weakness of humankind.²⁴

23. One can take CDH to address a different objection—not DCA, but an argument which adds to DCA's premisses further claims about the way things actually have gone—God's actual plans, the Fall, etc. This other objection would claim in effect that given Creation, God's actual plans, the Fall, and so on, still other ways of saving humanity were open to an omnipotent, perfectly wise God, and so God would have avoided the Incarnation and Atonement. (5) does not entail that P is possible relative to this set of conditions, that is, that

(5a) there is a possible world in which history goes just as it did up to the Fall, including God's making all plans He has actually made, and God does not become incarnate or atone.

Anselm may have a stronger case against (5a) than he does against (5). (I owe this point to Scott MacDonald.)

24. CDH I, 8, S II, p. 59, ll. 18–20, 22–23, 24, 27; p. 60, ll. 1–2.

This text *could* be pointing out that orthodox Christology allows the divine nature to include such properties as impassibility. But DCA does not contend that offering C-salvation excludes properties from the divine nature. It contends that offering C-salvation is incompatible with being the individual who bears the divine nature. So if Anselm wants to answer DCA, as the context suggests, he must be making a claim about a Person, not a nature. If Anselm is answering DCA, this text may invoke Chalcedonian Christology in order to reject (6).

(6) presupposes that pain, death, and humiliation or "lowering" are costs God pays. But Chalcedonian Christians do not hold that "God the Son dies in His human nature" or "God the Son dies *qua* human" entail "God the Son dies." For no orthodox Christian holds that for three days, the Trinity was reduced to a Duo.²⁵ Further, if "God the Son dies *qua* human" does not entail "God the Son dies," it is not clear why "God the Son feels pain *qua* human" would entail "God the Son feels pain": the inferences are the same formally. Perhaps Anselm brings in Chalcedon to suggest that pain, death, and humiliation are not truly costs *to God* of C-salvation. Anselm's *Proslogion* treatment of God's mercy suggests as much. For there, Anselm argues that though God acts toward humanity as the merciful would, He is not merciful intrinsically, because He does not feel the emotion of compassion, that is, He does not suffer sorrow which is due to human sorrow.²⁶ This amounts to arguing that though "God has mercy" is true, God has mercy without suffering its cost, which in the *Proslogion* is a form of sorrow. Perhaps Anselm's Chalcedonian move seeks to suggest the same argument in the context of a fuller account of the apparent cost of God's mercy.

V. HUMILIATION AS A COST

I now suggest that Anselm's Chalcedonian move may show that C-salvation's cost does not include humiliation/lowering. But I also argue that the Chalcedonian move does not show that pain and human death are not genuine costs of C-salvation. If this is true, the Chalcedonian move does not defeat (6b).

When Bosso first states the omnipotence-wisdom argument, Anselm replies that

the more miraculously and wondrously He has restored us from [the] evils in which we found ourselves . . . the more He has demonstrated the greater degree of His love and graciousness toward us.²⁷

25. See Aquinas, ST IIIa, 50, 2–3 and 46, 12; for the general principle, ST IIIa 16, 4.

26. *Proslogion* 8.

27. CDH I, 3, S II, p. 52, l. 31–p. 53, l. 3.

Anselm in effect suggests a shift in perspective on Boso's *humilia*. If these are humiliations, they are humiliations God undertakes because He loves us. But this makes them precisely glories, not humiliations, for God. A degrading act can become noble if it is undertaken as an act of sacrificial love: learning that someone who paraded through town in a diaper did so to ransom a child from a kidnapper, one might more incline to bow than to laugh when one next sees that person. So too, it is not that God abases Himself by going through *humilia*. Rather, the *humilia* are exalted, as they become means by which God displays His perfect love, and expresses rather than debases His nature. The Chalcedonian move simply puts this point into the language of theological tradition.

Against the perfect-being version of the *humilia* argument, Anselm's shift suggests that God is not less perfect for having a life containing a human life. For the value of His act of love supervenes on the disvalue of His human existence, and perhaps this leaves the overall value of God's life at least as great as it would have been otherwise. The Chalcedonian move suggests that the value of God's incarnate life is determined by God's divine, not His human nature. This is a reasonable claim: Christ's human existence is an *act* of God the Son, and the nature and value of an act depends greatly on its agent's nature, intentions, and motives.

Anselm's Chalcedonian shift displays a possible alternate view of Boso's *humilia*. By so doing, it blocks the *humilia* argument. For it requires Boso to argue for his reading of the *humilia* over Anselm's equally legitimate reading, and Boso has not done so. Beyond this, DCA is attempting a *reductio*, an argument based (save perhaps for [6b]) on premises internal to Christian theology. So one who offers DCA should let the Christian reply to DCA from other resources of Christian theology. I therefore suggest that one who propounds DCA should accept Anselm's appeal to divine love and deny that Christians must concede C-salvation's costs to include Boso's *humilia*. Now the *humilia* are the only apparent costs the Incarnation would have apart from the Atonement. So this concession leaves (6) and DCA able to object only to the Atonement. The Chalcedonian move blocks DCA as an objection to the Incarnation.

VI. HUMAN DEATH AS A COST

I now suggest that the Chalcedonian move does not show that pain and human death are not among the Atonement's costs to God. While it is true that, on Chalcedonian Christology, God the Son suffers pain and death *qua* human, not *qua* God,²⁸ the pain and death belong to the Person, not the nature.²⁹ If God the Son dies *qua* human, then God the Son undergoes

28. CDH I, 8, S II, p. 59, ll. 18–28.

29. See, for example, ST IIIa 46, 12.

human death, even if God the Son does not die *simpliciter*.³⁰ For if life-processes cease in a human body the life of Bill Clinton animates, one belonging to Clinton, then Clinton undergoes human death. Dualists may add that if life-processes cease, Clinton's human soul is severed from Clinton's human body, and only so does Clinton truly undergo human death. If God the Son dies *qua* human, life-processes cease in a human body belonging to God the Son, one which a life belonging to God the Son animates, and, dualists will say, a human body belonging to God the Son is severed from a human soul belonging to God the Son. So if what happens to Clinton constitutes undergoing human death, so does what happens to God the Son. Further, at the core of the Christian message is the claim that God loved humanity enough to suffer human death for its sake. That claim is vacuous if Jesus' human death had no cost to God.

To undergo human death *is* to pay a cost. This is clearest if human death is the end of one's existence.³¹ But even if it is not—as for God the Son and (as Christians think) the rest of us—it is still the loss of *ante-mortem* (AM) life in a human body.³² This is the loss of a good thing, even if a better replaces it. While the better may make up for the loss, it does not eradicate the loss, or make it other than a loss. The better need not even make it inappropriate to regret the loss.

30. It follows, for orthodox Christians, that "God the Son undergoes human death" does not entail "God the Son dies." I think we can understand why this entailment would fail. For humans, undergoing human death entails dying. But God the Son is not a human being. The Incarnation is a bit like this: an author writes a play in which the author appears as a character. The author is as truly a character as any other character; there is nothing Docetic about the author's appearance there. In the play, the character dies. This death is as real as any death in the play. But though the author dies in the play, it does not follow that the author dies. The author is still there writing. (The analogy is imperfect: a play is a fiction, and I do not mean to suggest that there is anything fictional about existence on earth, or the Incarnation. But analogies need not be perfect to make their point. I do not myself hold that existing in a play is a mode of genuine existence. But some do, and those who do favor ontologies on which fictional beings in some sense exist will find the analogy especially apt.)

31. *Pace* Epicurus, Lucretius and their modern defenders (for example, Stephen Rosenbaum, "How to Be Dead and Not Care," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 [1986]: pp. 217–225).

32. The Epicurean claim, in a nutshell, is this: human death cannot be a loss or a cost. For it is either only if the ending of one's existence is a loss. But the ending of one's existence cannot be a loss, because if one's existence ends, one is not there to suffer loss (see, for example, Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 124–25, in *Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson [Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988], p. 23). So, oddly enough, an Epicurean can reject a Christian's claim that human death is a cost or involves a loss only by rejecting belief in an afterlife. For if human death is not the end of one's existence, one is there to suffer whatever loss it involves. For Epicureans, death is a greater loss or cost if one has an afterlife than if one does not (since if one does not, it is not [they argue] a loss or cost at all).

Suppose that one's *post-mortem* (PM) life is better overall than one's AM life. Still, the two phases of one's life might be related as adulthood to childhood. By becoming an adult, one loses various features of childhood. Some of these are preferable to corresponding features of adulthood, even if being an adult is overall better than being a child. Even if one would not want to be a child again, it is not irrational to regret no longer having a child's energy or innocence. It is conceivable that one have an adult's age and a child's energy, or an adult's wisdom and a child's innocence (so Matthew 10:16, "be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves"), and one would be better off if one did. For that matter, it could be rational to regret no longer having a child's innocence even if one cannot conceive of combining this with the positive features of one's adult life. For it could be rational to value innocence more than those positive features: consider a criminal drowning in remorse for heinous crimes.

One can even rationally regret losing childhood's *disadvantages*—childhood ignorance, for example. Now it would not be rational to regret losing this if only the having of knowledge mattered. If only knowledge matters, then having more is better, and there is nothing to regret in ceasing to have less. But some goods lessen as ignorance lessens—for instance, freedom from worry. It is rational to regret having more to worry about, and so regret the loss of a worry-free state. If so, then if freedom from worry supervened on ignorance, it is also rational to regret one's loss of ignorance, even if overall, one is glad to have the knowledge which makes one worry.³³ For freedom from worry is a good incommensurable with knowledgeability—that is, a good which does not stand to it as less or more of one univocal value. Wherever incommensurable goods not of grossly different sizes are involved, it is possible rationally to regret losing one for the other's sake. So too, then, if some goods distinctive of childhood are incommensurable with adult goods, some who know they are better off overall as adults may still rationally value some goods of childhood more highly than some goods of adulthood, or at least value them highly enough to rue their passing.³⁴

If PM life is to AM life as adulthood is to childhood, then even if God the Son's PM life is better overall than His AM life, we can still see God the

33. These attitudes are not inconsistent. It would be inconsistent to both welcome and regret knowledge *simpliciter*, that is, just in itself. But in the case described, one welcomes knowledge *simpliciter* but regrets it *secundum quid*, this is to say, insofar as it brings grounds for worry.

34. Let me briefly cash in this analogy. Matthew 22:30 suggests that at least some features of marriage will not be preserved in the resurrection—or, more radically, suggests that marriage-relations will be abrogated then. If I love my wife, then even if I think that (if this occurs) I will be in a better state overall, it is certainly rational for me to hope that my relationship with her will somehow be preserved in the next life. If this is rational in my present state of mind, it *seems* rational to infer that I might still regret my marriage's passing, even in a very different future state of mind.

Son's human death as a loss and a cost. Further, the loss and cost are greater the longer the life God the Son gives up. Anselm contends that Jesus was exempt from the penalties of original sin, including natural liability to death.³⁵ Anselm infers that Jesus was able to live as long as God the Son chose.³⁶ If so, Jesus could have lived as long as time lasted. God the Son is able to effect it that time never ends. Thus God the Son's human death involved the loss of a potentially endless span of AM life. No other human death could have so great a cost, in this respect.

One might object here, based on Anselm's claim that God exists timelessly.³⁷ A timeless being has no past. (Whatever has a past is *ipso facto* temporal.) If so, then if God is timeless, no episode in God's life is in God's past—and so no episode in God's life is ever over. Thus if God is timeless, then even while Jesus' body lay in the tomb, God had not lost His life in a human body.

Now if God is timeless, one must just accept this—and with it the sobering thought that whatever cost God bears in the Passion, He bears eternally. But even so, Jesus' human death had a cost for God. Christians hold that God became incarnate in Jesus. If He did, God's life includes Jesus' life. God's being timeless affects not this fact, but rather what account one gives of this inclusion. If God is timeless, Jesus' life is not an episode in God's life; a timeless life has no episodes. Rather, if God is timeless, God lives His life in one timeless present.³⁸ But if God became incarnate in Christ, His timeless life may include Jesus' life in time as one set of events timelessly co-present with others.³⁹ Or perhaps if God is timeless, the events of Jesus' life are not events of God's life. (After all, the events of Jesus' life have temporal dates, and it is not clear that events in a timeless being's life can have temporal dates.) But perhaps instead, God's life includes Jesus' life in the sense that timelessly and all at once, God the Son wills, owns, and feels as His the experiences of Jesus of Nazareth. First-person experiences of events in Jesus' life need not be dated, even if the events are. If so, they can be events in a timeless God's life.

Whatever the precise mode of inclusion, if God was incarnate in Christ, then what Jesus' life includes has consequences for what God's life includes. If Jesus suffers human death, God's life includes a period of Jesus' life (or experience of such a period) which might have been AM bodily existence, and was instead some other sort of existence. *Per* our earlier argument, this involves the loss of some goods. If God is timeless, this cannot entail that God first had, and then lacked, these goods. (If He first had, then lacked

35. CDH II, 10.

36. CDH II, 10.

37. So *Proslogion* 19.

38. For explication of "timeless present," see Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," in *The Concept of God*, ed. Thomas Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 225.

39. For timeless co-presence, see Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity," 226.

them, His life had temporal episodes.) But one *can* take this loss counterfactually. If my parents lose all their money before my birth, we say that I have lost something, namely the quality of life I might have had, had they not gone broke. I need not ever have actually had that quality of life for this talk of loss to make sense. So too, a timeless God loses goods by becoming incarnate in a man who dies in that timelessly God's life lacks the goods (perhaps an endless span of AM goods) it would have contained had this man not died.

According to Christian orthodoxy, Christ's death is a cost of C-salvation. One can make sense of this in terms of lost goods. Chalcedonian Christology neither means to nor can deny this, despite pointing out that "God the son dies *qua* human" does not entail "God the Son dies." Thus if Anselm's appeal to Chalcedon is meant to rebut the claim that C-salvation cost God human death, it is a singularly bad move.

VII. PAIN AS A COST

The cost of C-salvation also includes Christ's sufferings *unto* death. I now submit that a Chalcedonian should allow that if God the Son feels pain *qua* human, then God the Son feels pain. The Chalcedonian can allow this just by saying that though "God the Son Fs *qua* human, therefore God the Son Fs" is not a formally valid inference (since it has at least one invalid instance, where "die" is the value of F); still, like many other formally invalid forms of inference, "God the Son Fs *qua* human, therefore God the Son Fs" does have some valid inferences as instances.⁴⁰ Like other valid instances of invalid forms of inference, "God the Son feels pain *qua* human, therefore God the son feels pain" is valid due to the content of the propositions involved rather than the form of the inference.

In Chalcedonian Christology, the sole individual to whom the states of Jesus' human body and mind belong is God the Son. If so, Jesus' pain-states belong to God the Son. It is not clear what this belonging can mean if God the Son does not feel them—one owns pain only if one feels pain.⁴¹ (Further, if God the Son does not feel pain when His human body and mind are in a pain-state, arguably He does not by becoming incarnate take on full human nature.) Thus even if God the Son's awareness is eternally joyful, still, because God the Son became incarnate, His awareness also eternally includes pain. These things are compatible. One can be joyful despite a toothache, or even the pain of terminal cancer.

40. "P, therefore Q" is not a formally valid inference, since it has as an instance the invalid "Paul is dead, therefore Paul is a walrus." But the valid inference "Paul is dead and John is married to Yoko, therefore John is married to Yoko" is also an instance of "P, therefore Q."

41. See for example, ST IIIa 15, 5.

God the Son would not have felt pain had He not become incarnate. Although it is true that as omniscient, God the Son is eternally aware of all pain, it is one thing to be aware of someone else's pain, in the third person, and quite another to feel pain oneself, in the first person. If as incarnate God the Son feels pain He would not otherwise have felt, this pain is a cost He pays to offer C-salvation. Any rational agent would prefer not to feel pain, *ceteris paribus*. Paying a cost one would rather not pay counts as suffering, in at least a minimal sense. But feeling pain is also suffering in a "thicker" sense, even if eternal joy encompasses the pain. The Christian message depicts the pain of the Passion as something God the Son suffers for us. This message is eviscerated if God the Son in fact feels no pain, or if this feeling is not a suffering. So no Chalcedonian Christian should mean to deny that God the Son feels pain.

Of course, if God the Son suffers and feels pain, one wonders in what sense God is impassible. A quick reply is that when Anselm, at least, explicates God's impassibility, he claims not that God feels no pain, but that God does not feel the pain of sorrow due to our misery.⁴² It could be that God feels no pain for others, or sympathetic or empathetic pain, and that God can feel first-person pain. Nor does Anselm's position entail that God feels no sorrow *simpliciter*. Anselm denies not that God feels sorrow but that our misery *accounts for* any sorrow God feels. Further, there is more than one way our misery might account for some divine sorrow. Perhaps not every way of accounting-for is equally objectionable, and perhaps Anselm's point is just that our misery does not account for God's sorrow in every way in which it might account for a human sorrow. Perhaps a divine sorrow could be *about* our misery without being *due to* our misery in some other, more objectionable sense.

Anselm would deny more generally that any divine sorrow is a *passio*, a state for which non-divine states of affairs causally or quasi-causally account. For *Monologion* 4 argues that God has entirely from Himself every state He is in by nature, and *Monologion* 25 that God has no accidental states (i.e. no states He is not in by nature). It follows that God has entirely from Himself every state He is in. Thus Anselm can allow that God feels some form of pain or sorrow only if there can be pain or sorrow which is not a *passio*. Can there be such things?

Here we can indulge a brief speculation. Aquinas argues that God has joy, delight, and love, which in us are passions, but has them as pure activities, not passions.⁴³ Perhaps there can also be pain or sorrow that are not passions but activities. According to Anselm, God undergoes voluntarily and with full control anything He undergoes in offering C-salvation.⁴⁴ Some might agree with Spinoza that this of itself converts His pain and sorrow

42. See *Proslogion* 8.

43. So Aquinas, SCG I, 90–91.

44. CDH I, 8–10; CDH II, 11.

from passions to actions.⁴⁵ Further, as Anselm sees it, even if Christ's purity from original sin requires that His mother have been sinless, still Christ has His purity entirely from Himself: for God the Son in His eternal nature brought it about that there was a sinless human mother whence His human nature could be born sinless.⁴⁶ If this counts in Anselm's eyes as Christ's having His purity wholly of Himself, Anselm could give a like account of Christ's pain or sorrow: even if creatures are in the causal chain leading to God the Son's suffering in His human nature, still if the chain originates solely in God and all its creaturely parts have only the causal roles God allots them, God the Son has His pain and sorrow from Himself. If C-salvation brings God pain or sorrow, then, for Anselm, these are wholly self-caused: in them God is active, not passive. For Anselm, perhaps, an impassible God can feel pain and sorrow because in Him, neither is a *passio*.

One can perhaps argue Anselm's conclusion as follows: that creatures cause the pain-states of Jesus' body and mind, and that God the Son has first-person experience of these pain-states, are true. But perhaps the Chalcedonian qualification—that God feels pain only *qua* human—serves *inter alia* to claim that this does not entail that creatures cause God the Son's first-person experience of Jesus' pain-states. Creatures cause God's pain-states by causing Jesus' only if Jesus' pain-states either are identical with God's or cause God's. The Chalcedonian qualification reminds us that God the Son's pain-states include Jesus' human pain-states as God the Son's mind includes Jesus' human mind and God the Son's life includes Jesus' human life. The relation these pairs share is not identity and may not be part-whole if God is timeless; further, if God's eternal being is prior in some sense to His life as incarnate, perhaps all causation between these pain-states, minds, and lives runs *from* God *to* Jesus, not *vice-versa*. Perhaps God's pain depends on creaturely activity counterfactually but not causally.

In any event, I submit that *CDH* does not build a good case against (5), and that Anselm's Chalcedonian move does not build a good case against (6) as applied to the Atonement. Still, I do not think we need concede DCA. To begin with—if we step back from Anselm's text for the nonce—we can point out an ambiguity in (3).

VIII. PERFECT RATIONALITY

(3) instances a conceptual truth about *prudential* rationality, the rationality that weighs cost against benefit. But perfect rationality includes more than perfect prudence. There are many rational virtues—including being effi-

45. Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. R. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), pt. V, prop. 3, corollary, 248.

46. *CDH* II, 16, p. 119, ll. 28–35.

cient, being prudent, and being moral (if moral principles have the right sort of rational warrant). Perfect rationality may involve all the rational virtues. It could be, for instance that for every rational virtue *F*, a perfectly rational person is perfectly *F*. But perhaps nothing can be perfect with respect to all rational virtues. For being perfect with respect to a virtue entails following the maxims of that virtue perfectly, and sometimes, perfectly following one rational virtue's maxims clashes with perfectly following another's: for instance, morally required actions can be inefficient. If nothing can be perfect with respect to all rational virtues, being perfectly rational consists in having a greatest compossible set of rational virtues—roughly, a set of virtues *FGH* had to degrees *n*, *n*₁, *n*₂, such that no other such set of virtues in degrees makes an agent more perfectly rational.⁴⁷ Perhaps, then, perfect rationality does not include perfect prudence. It might even include a very low degree of prudence.

We now can see that (3) is ambiguous, between

(3a) if God is perfect in prudential rationality, God pays no unjustified, avoidable costs to save humankind, and

(3b) if God is perfectly rational overall, God pays no unjustified, avoidable costs to save humankind.

(3a) is what instances a conceptual truth. But (3b) is what one needs to derive (8) from (1) and (3). Given (3a), (3b) is true if

(3c) if God is perfectly rational overall, God is perfect in prudential rationality.

But our treatment of the kinds of rational virtue casts some doubt on (3c). One can cast still more doubt on it.

Suppose that, as (11) has it, God would be imprudent to suffer to save humanity. (This might be so, for example, if the evil of divine suffering is so great as to outweigh all goods achieved by offering humanity C-salvation.) Even if this were so, God's suffering arguably would involve praiseworthy imprudence. We admire those whose love for others is so great as to make them risk or suffer disproportionate harm for those they love. The rational virtue of wisdom, one might argue, includes knowing when not to be bound to the bloodless perfection of ideal prudential rationality. Love, if ardent, is occasionally imprudent, but the wise know that a life with an ardent love may be better overall than a life without one. Thus if perfect rationality includes perfect wisdom (a fairly plausible claim), it might *not*

47. A greatest compossible, because for all we can say here, perhaps there can be ties, or perhaps cases where sets of compossible rational perfections *ABC* each are greater than any such sets other than *ABC*, but *A*, *B*, and *C* are incommensurable—they cannot be ranked against each other at all.

include perfect prudence, as the perfectly wise might see the value of letting love rule them.

Again, if we are selecting a set of rational perfections to constitute perfect rationality, the relative value or importance of each perfection in the set is a relevant factor. If being moral is in some sense more important or valuable than being efficient, and one cannot be both perfectly moral and perfectly efficient, then it seems that genuinely perfect rationality will include perfect morality rather than perfect efficiency: even if both are perfections, perfect morality seems a more valuable perfection. Similarly, perfect moral rationality seems more important than perfect prudential rationality is. If so, then if there is a reasonable case that self-sacrificial love is an important component of an ideal moral character, there is just as reasonable a case that perfect rationality does not include perfect prudence.

Christians, then, can counter (3c) by asserting that (1) is non-negotiable, but if God is perfectly rational and His suffering on our behalf would be imprudent, perfect overall rationality does not include perfect prudence, because it includes the moral perfection of perfect love.⁴⁸ The Christian might also argue that perfect being theology does not force Christians to accept that God is perfectly prudent. For perfect being theology does so only if it explicates God's perfection in a way Christians can and should accept. Love is a genuine divine perfection. If Christians hold that God is love, Christians doing perfect being theology ought to let love trump other *prima facie* divine perfections if those conflict with the perfection of love. So perhaps Christians can reject a perfect-being case for (3c) as well. If so, Christians can also reject (3b), and so block DCA.

One can also take these arguments as objections to (6b). So taken, the arguments contend that even if God could have avoided suffering and dying for us, it is rationally justified that God suffer and die for us. This is rational because it is at times rational to be imprudent to express love, or because it is rationally justified to have the greatest possible moral character, and this perfection (one can argue on non-theological grounds) may include ardent love.

IX. FITTINGNESS

Ardent love for humanity might yield one way to reject (6b). But CDH suggests another, different way. Anselm repeatedly brings in "fitnesses" (*convenientiae*)⁴⁹ as *reasons* for various features of C-salvation.⁵⁰ At one point,

48. Absent a general case for perfect love, this response can seem question-begging. Given the last paragraph's argument, it is not.

49. CDH I, 4, S II, p. 52, ll. 5–6.

50. See, for example, CDH I, 22, S II, p. 90, ll. 9–23; CDH I, 23, S II, p. 91, ll. 9–26; CDH II, 3, S II, p. 98; CDH II, 8, S II, pp. 102–4; CDH II, 16, S II, p. 119, ll. 11–19.

Anselm begins “let us consider . . . whether this view is rationally fitting” (*rationabiliter conveniat*)⁵¹ and then continues,

If humanity sinned through pleasure, is it not fitting that humanity make satisfaction through distress? . . . And is it not fitting that humanity, which so stole itself from God in sinning that it cannot more remove itself, so give itself to God in satisfying that it cannot more greatly give itself?⁵²

Here Anselm’s “fitnesses” are a set of poetic parallels which are *reasons* for God to offer humanity C-salvation. Anselm equates being fitting and being reasonable in another passage:

let us in God’s case accept no unfittingness, even the smallest, and reject no reason, even the smallest, if no greater reason contradicts [*repugnat*] it. For just as in God’s case impossibility follows from an unfittingness, however small, so in God’s case a reason, however small, is accompanied by necessity if a greater does not defeat it.⁵³

By taking poetic fitness as a reason for God’s choice of C-salvation, Anselm is claiming that C-salvation’s “poetic justice” is a *rational* merit, one which can legitimately attract a rational agent. Anselm’s “fittingness” is an aesthetic or quasi-aesthetic value C-salvation realizes—“fitting” things, “carefully considered display a certain unspeakable beauty.”⁵⁴ “Poetic justice” is not only just, but also beautiful. Perhaps due to his Augustinian heritage, Anselm realizes that a state of affairs’ beauty is *reason* to bring it about. Sometimes Anselmian “fittingness” also seems a matter of moral appropriateness.⁵⁵ But the very concept of poetic justice suggests that being morally appropriate can also be a way to be beautiful.

Anselm does in fact see God as having chosen a pattern of world-history and world-governance at least partly for its beauty, because he sees God as motivated to repair the breach sin makes in this pattern at least partly to repair “the order and beauty of the universe.”⁵⁶ Beauty seems a value a wise God could heed. So it could be rational for God to choose a plan of salvation whose beauty attracts Him—whether or not some other plan might have a smaller cost. How great need a beauty be to justify God’s undertaking an action-plan as costly as that of C-salvation? We do not know. Nor do we know whether from God’s perspective the actual course of world- and salvation-history evinces enough beauty to do so. But we need not know

51. CDH II, 11, S II, p. 111, l. 6.

52. CDH II, 11, S II, p. 111, ll. 8-9, 12-14.

53. CDH I, 10, S II, p. 67, ll. 2-6. (See also, CDH I, 16, S II, p. 75, ll. 1-3.)

54. CDH I, 3, S II, p. 51, ll. 11-20.

55. See, for example, CDH I, 18, S II, p. 79, ll. 19-24.

56. CDH I, 15, S II, p. 73, l. 8.

these things to refuse to accept (6b). For once we consider the role beauty might play in God's choice of C-salvation, we see that we have grounds to accept (6b) only if we have grounds to believe that world- and salvation-history do not have enough beauty from God's perspective to justify C-salvation. And of course, we are in no position to know this.

Thus the bare raising of the Beauty Response to (6b) blocks DCA. Anselm can argue against (6b) that a perfectly rational God might rationally prefer paying the costs of C-salvation to sacrificing a particular sort of beauty. By making this claim, Anselm could concede that these costs are avoidable and that avoiding them could leave the world with an acceptable balance of moral good and evil, and yet let God's choice be justifiable by appeal to the rationality of loving beauty, or one particular kind of beauty. The Beauty Response (like the argument about love just completed) also suggests an alternate reading of Anselm's Chalcedonian response to Boso's *humilia*: perhaps Anselm's point is not that the *humilia* are not truly costs, but that they are costs which it is overall rational (by their connection with love), fitting or beautiful to pay. Thus Anselm's suggesting various "fitnesses" of C-salvation turns out also to suggest a response to DCA.⁵⁷

57. This paper stems from comments I delivered at the Robert J. Henle Conference in Medieval Philosophy, St. Louis University, 8 Apr 1994. My thanks to Eleonore Stump for hosting the conference and inviting me, to Marilyn Adams (my commentee) for sparking my interest in the topic, and to members of the conference audience for their helpful comments.